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Gleanings from the *Mahāvastu* (II)*

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Abstract:

The article deals with some passages in the *Mahāvastu* (abbr. Mv), which were misunderstood by Émile Senart in his *editio princeps* but can be restored or considerably improved on the basis of better readings found in an old palm-leaf manuscript from Nepal (abbr. ms. Sa), dating back to the 12-13th centuries, as well as by comparison with the parallel passages found in the Sanskrit, Pāli and Tibetan texts.

Keywords:

Mahāvastu, Buddhist (Hybrid) Sanskrit, Senart

1.

In one of the chapters of the *Mahāvastu* there occurs a passage in which the complexion of the Buddha is compared to a part of a Tāla fruit:

Mv(KM) 3.414f.

*pariśuddho bhagavato Gautamasya cchavīvarṇo paryavadāto¹ viprasannañ ca mukha-
varṇam. sayyathāpi nāma tālasya pakvasya samprati cyutasya vṛntā bandhanāśayo²
pariśuddho bhavati paryavadāto sapītanirbhāso ca evam eva bhagavato Gautamasya
cchavīvarṇo pariśuddho paryavadāto viprasanno ca mukhavarṇo.³*

“Pure and bright is the complexion of Lord Gautama, serene is his face. Like the part of a ripe Tāla fruit which is attached to the footstalk (*bandhanāśaya*), right after it has fallen from the stalk is bright and with a golden sheen, so is the complexion of Lord Gautama pure and bright and his face serene”.⁴

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¹ Sen. *pariśuddho parya*°.

² *āśaya* < *āśraya*; cf. Pā *āsaya* < *āśaya*, *āśraya*.

³ Cf. Sen. 3.325 *pariśuddho bhagavato Gautamasya cchavīvarṇo pariśuddho paryavadāto viprasannañ ca mukhavarṇam | sayyathāpi nāma tālasya pakvasya samprati vṛntacyutasya bandhanāśrayo pariśuddho bhavati paryavadāto sapītanirbhāso ca evam eva bhagavato Gautamasya cchavīvarṇo pariśuddho paryavadāto viprasanno ca mukhavarṇo*.

⁴ Cf. Jon. III 316 misunderstands the simile: “Very clear is the complexion of the exalted Gotama, very clear and very bright; very serene is his countenance. Like as, when a ripe palm-nut has just fallen from the tree, the



bandhanās(r)aya is the part of a Tāla fruit right underneath the husk, which is attached to the stalk. It is golden-yellow and glistening, in contrast to the remaining part of the fruit which is dark in colour. See Plate 3.

We find the same simile also in the *Lalitavistara* (abbr. LV) 405.10:
tadyathāpi nāma tālaphalasya pakvasya samanantaravṛntacyutasya bandhanāśrayaḥ (mss. °*āśayaḥ*) *pītanirbhāso bhavati pariśuddhaḥ paryavadāta evam eva bhavato Gautamasya pariśuddhānīndriyāṇi pariśuddhaṃ mukhamaṇḍalaṃ paryavādataṃ*.

“Just like the part of a ripe Tāla fruit which is attached to the footstalk, right after it has fallen from the stalk is of yellow hue, in the same way the senses of Lord Gautama are pure and (his) round face is pure and bright”.⁵

The Tibetan translation of LV⁶ reads:
 Lit. “Just like the immediate basis of a ripe Tāla fruit detached from the footstalk becomes yellow, pure and bright, in the same way, O Gautama, your senses are pure and your face is pure and bright”, i.e., when the ripe fruit of the Tāla tree is detached from the footstalk, the part of the fruit which has been attached to the stalk becomes golden and bright.”⁷

In SN IV 306.10f. we find the following passage:

stalk which supported it is very clear and bright with a golden sheen, just so is the complexion of Gotama the Exalted One very clear and bright and his countenance very serene”.

⁵ Cf. Foucaux 1884: 337 “Ainsi, par exemple, du fruit mûr du Tāla, aussitôt qu’il est détaché du pédoncule, le support qui l’attachait prend le brillant d’une couleur jaune ...”.

⁶ *’phags pa rGya cher rol pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po’i mdo* (*ārya-Lalitavistara nāma mahāyānasūtra*), Derge, no. 95, mDo sde, kha 194a (fol. 194a7): *’di lta ste dper na / shing ta la’i ’bras bu smin pa rtsa ba nas chad ma thag pa’i rtsa ba logs ser por gda’ ba lags te / yongs su dag cing yongs su byang ba de* (fol. 194b1) *bzhin du gau ta ma khyod kyi dbang po rnam ni yongs su dag la / zhal gyi dkyil ’khor ni yongs su dag cing yongs su byang ba’o //*.

⁷ Cf. Foucaux 1884: 379 “Ainsi, par exemple, que le fruit mûr du Tala, aussitôt qu’il est détaché du pédoncule, se revêt d’une nuance dorée, est complètement pur, complètement achevé”.

ekam samayam Bhagavā Rājagahe viharati Veḷuvane Kalandakanivāpe || atha kho Tālapuṭo naṭagāmaṇi yena Bhagavā tenupasaṅkami (...)

Spk III 102.7f. explains the name Tālapuṭa in the following way: *Tālapuṭo ti, evaṃ nāmaḥ. tassa bandhanā-mutta-tāla-pakka-vaṇṇo viya mukhavaṇṇo vippasanno ahosi* (“like the colour of the ripe Tāla fruit detached from the stalk”).

2. *Śaṅkhalikhita*

There are numerous passages within the Mv in which the word *saṃlikhita* occurs:
Sa 284r6 ⁸*sambādho punar ayaṃ gṛhāvāso rajasām āvāse⁹ abhyavakāsaṃ pravrajyā. taṃ na labhyaṃ agāraṃ adhyāvasantena ekāntasaṃlikhitam ekāntam anavadyam ekānta-parisuddham ekāntaparyavadātaṃ brahmacaryaṃ caritum. yaṃ nūnāhaṃ agārasyānagāriyaṃ pravrajeyaṃ¹⁰* (= Sa 149v6, 158r5, 342r5, 342r2, 343r5, 343v3, 343v5, 344r2, 344r5, 344v2, 345r3, the mss. and Sen. each time read °*saṃlikhita*).

A very similar passage occurs also in the SBV II 231.30-232.3, where the ms. also has an incorrect form *śaṅkhālīkṛtaṃ* for *śaṅkhalikhitaṃ*:

sambādho gṛhāvāsaḥ rajasām āvāsaḥ abhyavakāsaṃ ca pravrajyā. tad idaṃ na <suka>raṃ gṛhiṇā agāraṃ adhyāvasatā ekāntaśaṅkhālīkṛtaṃ (corr. Gnoli *ekānta-śaṅkhalikhitaṃ*), *yāvaj jīvaṃ, kevalaṃ, paripūrṇaṃ, parisuddhaṃ, paryavadātaṃ, brahmacaryaṃ caritum. yaṃ nv ahaṃ keśaśmaśrūṇy avatārya, kāsāyāni vastrāṇy ācchādya, samyag eva śraddhayā agārād anagārikāṃ pravrajeyaṃ.*

Edgerton (BHSD s.v. *saṃlikhita*) suggests “adj. or ppp. (not in Skt. or Pali; = AMg. *saṃlihiya*, ppp. to the noun *saṃlehaṇā* = Jain Skt. *saṃlekhanā*; Pali has *sallekha* = *saṃlekha*, q.v., and °*lekhitācāra*), strictly, severely controlled, restricted: in a cliché describing brahmacaryaṃ, *ekānta-saṃlikhitaṃ*”, which is incorrect (so is the explanation of the form given in SWTF s.v. *śaṃkalīkṛta*).

Both *saṃlikhita* in the Mv and *śaṅkhālīkṛta* in SBV are corruptions of the same form *saṃkha-likhita* (Skt *śaṅkha*°, MW “perfect in its kind, faultless, flawless”; Pā id., PTSD “like a polished shell”). It is also confirmed by numerous occurrences of this form in Pali, e.g.

DN I 63.2ff. *sambādho gharāvaso rajopatho abbhokāso pabbajjā. na idaṃ sukaraṃ agāraṃ ajjhāvasatā ekantaparipuṇṇaṃ ekantaparisuddhaṃ saṃkhalikhitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ caritum. yaṃ nūnāhaṃ kesamassuṃ ohāretvā kāsāyāni vatthāni acchādetvā agārasmā*

⁸ Cf. Sn 406 *sambādho 'yaṃ gharāvāso rajassāyatanaṃ iti | abbhokāso ca pabbajjā iti disvāna pabbaji ||*; SN II 219.24 *sambādho gharāvāso rajāpatho abbhokāso pabbajjā*; Śbh I 16.6ff. *sambādho gṛhāvāso rajasām āvāsaḥ | abhyavakāsaṃ pravrajya yaṃ nv ahaṃ sarvaṃ kaḍḍhatravargaṃ dhanadhānyahiraṇyaṃ cōtsṛjya svākhyāte dharmavinaye samyag evāgārād anagārikāṃ pravrajeyaṃ, pravrajitvā ca pratipattiyā sampādayeyam iti | ya eva samutpannaś chandaḥ kuśaleṣu dharmeṣu, ayam ucyaṭe kuśalo dharmacchandaḥ.*

⁹ Sen. °*vāso* (≠ mss.); for the nom. sg. masc. -e, cf. BHSG § 8.25; Abhis III § 6.3; Karashima 2002 § 9.2.

¹⁰ Cf. SN II 219.27f. *yaṃ nūnāhaṃ kesamassuṃ ohāretvā kāsāyāni vatthāni acchādetvā agārasmā anagāriyaṃ pabbajjeyaṃ.*

anagāriyaṃ pabbajeyyaṃ ti (cf. Sv I 181.1f. *saṅkha-likhitam likhita-saṅkha-sadisam dhota-saṅkha-sappaṭibhāgaṃ caritabbam*).

DN(F) 66.5ff. “Für jemand, der das Hausleben führt, ist es nicht leicht, den ganz vollkommenen, ganz reinen, perlmuttergleichen heiligen Wandel zu führen”.

This term might be somehow connected with the names of two brothers, great sages, who were famous for their penance and for abiding strictly by the rule in the country, namely cutting off one’s hands on a charge of theft. When Likhita ate Śaṅkha’s vegetables without asking for permission, the latter sent Likhita to the king to receive appropriate punishment (see PE, p. 453, s.v. Likhita I).¹¹ They are said to have composed the *Dharmasūtras*.

3. *Alparajaskajātīya*

Mv(KM) 3.411

atha khalu bhagavato etad abhūsi “Udrako Rāmaputro *śuddho alparajo aparokṣajātīyo so ca dūragato atikrāntagato neva saṃjñānāsamaññāyatana saḥavratāye*¹² *dharmā deśayati. adya saptaḥam kālaṃ gata*¹³ *Udrako Rāmaputro, mahājāni*¹⁴ *Udrako Rāmaputro. katamo pi khalv anyo pi satvo śuddho alparajo aparokṣajātīyo me pratibalo prathamam dharmam deśayitam*¹⁵ *ājānitum na ca naṃ*¹⁶ *viheṭṭhaye*¹⁷ *yam idaṃ dharmaśravaṇāya?*

All the mss. and Sen. read *aparokṣajātīyo* for *alparajaskajātīyo*. Interestingly, *aparokṣa*^o occurs also in the parallel passage in LV 403.6, which reads: *Rudrakaḥ khalu Rāmaputraḥ śuddhaḥ svākāraḥ suvijñāpakāḥ suviśodhako mandarāgadoṣamoho*¹⁸ *()parokṣavijñāno*.¹⁹

¹¹ Cf. PW s.v. *likhita* “2) m. N. pr. eines R̥ṣi, der auch als Verfasser eines Gesetzbuches fast immer in Verbindung mit Śaṅkha genannt wird. Nach MBH. 12,668. fgg. wurden dem Likhita, weil er in der Einsiedelei seines Bruders Śaṅkha ohne dessen Erlaubnis Fürchte gebrochen und gegessen hatte, vom Könige Sudjuma beide Hände abgehauen. Daher ist *śaṅkhalikhita* so v. a. "ein strenge Gerechtigkeit übender Fürst" 4252. *śaṅkhalikhita vṛttiḥ* so v. a. "das Ueben strenger Gerechtigkeit" 4756. *śaṅkhalikhita priya* "ein Freund strenger Gerechtigkeit"”.

¹² Na Sen. *naiva*^o; “stage of neither consciousness nor unconsciousness” (BHSD s.v.); Pā *neva saññānāsamaññā*^o.

¹³ Sen. *kālagato*; for the so-called *aluk-samāsa*, a *tatpuruṣa* compound with the case ending (here acc.) in its first element retained, cf. Whitney 1889: 483, § 1250; cf. also Oberlies 2001: 122; Sn(tr.N) 182 (*ad* Sn 168); Sadd 741, 745, 767; cf. also Merv-Av *kālaṃ-√gam* “to die”.

¹⁴ Sa Na *mahājīno* (s.e.); Sen. *mahāhānir* (≠ mss.); see DP s.v. *jāni*² “loss, deprivation”; cf. Vin I 7.33f. *atha kho bhagavato etad ahoṣi: mahājāniyo kho Uddako Rāmaputto, sace hi so imaṃ dhammaṃ suṇeyya, khippam eva ājāneyyā*.

¹⁵ Sa *deśayitum*; Na Sen. *deśitam*.

¹⁶ Na Sen. *me*.

¹⁷ Corr. Na; Sa *viheṭṭhaye*; Sen. *viheṭṭhaye*.

¹⁸ Cf. Tibetan, Derge no. 95, mdo sde, kha 193a (fol. 193a3) *rnam par ses pa lkog tu ma gyur pa* “whose cognition [of phenomena] is evident, not hidden” (cf. BHSD s.v. *aparokṣa* “having not secret intelligence”).

¹⁹ Cf. Foucaux 1884: 335 “Quel est l’être pur, de bonne nature, facile à discipliner, facile à instruire, facile à purifier, ayant peu de passion, de haine et de trouble d’esprit, et ne faisant pas un secret de la science, et qui, faute d’avoir entendu la loi, a subi une grande privation?”.

On the basis of the three occurrences of the distorted form in Mv and LV, Edgerton (BHSD s.v. *aparokṣa*) suggests: “*aparokṣa-vijñāna* LV 403.5, 9 (of Rudraka Rāmaputra) and *aparokṣa-jātīya* Mv iii.322.11, 14 (of Udraka Rāmaputra), or *-jātika* Mv iii.415.10, of manifest, open understanding (LV), or manifest, open (? not obscure? precise mg. not very clear) in nature (Mv)”]; however, his observations are not correct (cf. also SWTF s.v. *aparokṣa-vijñāna*).

In fact, the correct form *alparajaska-* “of slight passion, free from passion” (BHSD s.v.) occurs three times in Mv(KM) 3.411 (note, however, that the parallel passages in the LV read *aparokṣa-*):

Mv *Ārāḍo Kālāmo śrāddho alparajo alparajaskajātīyo*;

Mv *katamo puna anyo pi satvo śuddho alparajaskajātīyo* (LV 403.4f. *katamaḥ sattvaḥ śuddhaḥ svākārāḥ suvineyaḥ suvijñāpakāḥ suviśodhako mandarāgadoṣa-moho 'parokṣavijñāno yo 'śrutavān dharmasya parihīyate*)

Mv *pañcakā bhadravargīyā śuddhā alparajā alparajaskajātīyo* (LV 404.7ff. *te khalu pañcakā bhadravargīyāḥ śuddhāḥ svākārāḥ suvijñāpakāḥ suviśodhakā mandarāgadoṣamohā aparokṣavijñānāḥ*).

Cf. also CPS II 116 *santi sattvā loke jātā vṛddhās tīkṣṇendriyā api madhyendriyā spi mṛdvindriyā api | svākārāḥ suvineyā alparajaso (')lparajaskajātīyā ye 'śravaṇād dharmasya parihīyante ||*;

as well as numerous occurrences in Pāli, e.g.

Vin I 5.6 *santi sattā apparajakkhajātīkā assavanatā dhammassa parihāyanti*

(see CPD s.v. *appa-rajakkha* “free from passions [said of a person in whom the guṇa rajas is insignificant; thus “fit for the dhamma”]”; DP s.v. *appa* “-rajakkha, with little or no passion or impurity; -rajakkhajātika, being by nature free from passion”).

It seems likely that *aparokṣa-* in the Mv and LV is a result of a series of wrong back-formations, i.e. *-kkha-* was backformed to *-kṣa-* instead of *-ska-*, *appa-* was ‘corrected’ to *apa-* instead of being backformed to *alpa-*, then the scribe seeing *aparājakṣa-* might have ‘corrected’ it to *aparokṣa-*.

4. *Bhavaṃmūlaka, bhavannetrika, bhagavantaprabhava, bhagavantapraṭiśaraṇa*

Mv(KM) 3.430

evam ukte āyusmantā paṃcakā bhadravargikā²⁰ bhagavantaṃ etad avocat “bhavaṃmūlakā²¹ khalu bhagavāṃ²² dharmā bhavannetrikā²³ bhagavan bhagavantaprabhavā²⁴ bhagavan

²⁰ Sen. °vargīyā; for the intervocalic *k < y*, cf. Norman CP VIII 104 (e.g. *Sabhika < Sabhiya; Bhallika < Bhalliya*).

²¹ Na Sen. *bhavamūlakā*; *bhavan* = *bhagavan*.

²² Na Sen. *bhagavan*; for the voc. sg. *bhagavān*, cf. BHSG § 18.81; Abhis III § 15.4.

²³ Na Sen. *bhavanetrikā*; *bhavan* = *bhagavan*.

²⁴ Na Sen. *bhavaprabhavā*; for the stem *-nta* in composition, cf. BHSG § 18.5.

*bhagavantapraṭiśaraṇā*²⁵. *sādhu bhagavāṃ bhikṣūṇāṃ etam arthaṃ bhāṣe. bhikṣū bhagavato sammukhāc chrūtvā sammukhā*²⁶ *pratigṛhitvā tathatvāya dhārayiṣyanti*”.

“O Lord, (our) teachings are rooted in the Lord (*bhagavaṃmūlakā*), guided by the Lord (*bhagavannetrikā*), have the Lord as their source (*bhagavaṃprabhavā*), have the Lord as their resort (*bhagavaṃpraṭiśaraṇā*). It would be good if the Lord would explain the meaning (of these words) to the monks”.

The correct readings in ms. Sa *bhavaṃmūlaka* “rooted in the Lord”, *bhavannetrika* “guided by the Lord”, *bhagavantaprabhava* “having the Lord as their source” and *bhagavantapraṭiśaraṇa* “having the Lord as their resort” were changed in ms. Na. The scribe probably regarded the stems *bhavan-* and *bhagavanta-* as scribal errors for *bhava-*. Therefore, he changed the text according to his understanding, and, since all the later mss. derive from ms. Na, they all follow its readings:

Na *bhavamūlakā khalu bhagavaṃ dharmā bhavanetrikā bhagavan bhavaprabhavā bhagavan bhavapraṭiśaraṇā*,

which was followed by Senart in Mv 3.337:

evam ukte bhikṣū bhagavantam etad avocat || bhavamūlakā bhagavan dharmā bhavanetrikā bhagavan bhavaprabhavāḥ bhavapraṭiśaraṇā | sādhu bhagavāṃ bhikṣūṇāṃ etam arthaṃ bhāṣe bhikṣū bhagavataḥ saṃmukhāc chrutvā saṃmukhāt pratigṛhitvā tathatvāya dhārayiṣyanti ||

Jon. III 331 “Coming-to-be, Lord, is the source of things; coming-to-be is their conduit; coming-to-be is their cause; coming-to-be is their mainstay”.

Cf. the parallel passages in Pāli, e.g.

MN I 309.30 *bhagavaṃmūlakā no bhante dhammā bhagavaṃnettikā bhagavaṃpaṭiśaraṇā. sādhu vata bhante bhagavan taṃ yeva paṭibhātu etassa bhāsitassa attho, bhagavato sutvā bhikkhū dhāressanti* (MN[tr.Ñ] 408 “Venerable sir, our teachings are rooted in the Blessed One, guided by the Blessed One, have the Blessed One as their resort”).

SN III 66.7 *bhagavaṃmūlakā no bhante dhammā bhagavannettikā bhagavaṃpaṭiśaraṇā* (SN[tr] 901 “Venerable sir, our teachings are rooted in the Blessed One, guided by the Blessed One, take recourse to the Blessed One”).

Bibliography and Abbreviations

Abhis = *Die Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ: Verhaltensregeln für buddhistische Mönche der Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādins*, herausgegeben, mit der chinesischen Parallel-version verglichen, übersetzt und kommentiert von Seishi Karashima, unter Mitwirkung von Oskar von Hinüber, Tokyo 2012: International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology, Soka University (Bibliotheca Philologica et Philosophica Buddhica XIII), 3 vols.

BHSD = Franklin Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary*, New Haven, 1953: Yale University Press.

BHSG = Franklin Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar*, New Haven, 1953: Yale University

²⁵ Na Sen. *bhavapraṭiśaraṇā*.

²⁶ Na Sen. *sammukhāt*.

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- CPD = *A Critical Pāli Dictionary*, begun by V. Trenckner, ed. D. Andersen *et al.*, Copenhagen, Bristol, 1924-2011.
- CPS = *Das Catuspariṣatsūtra, Eine kanonische Lehrschrift über die Begründung der buddhistischen Gemeinde*, hrsg. und bearb. von Ernst Waldschmidt, Teil I-III, Berlin 1952-1962 (*Abhandlungen der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, Klasse für Sprachen, Literatur und Kunst* 1952, 2; 1956, 1; 1960, 1).
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- DP = *A Dictionary of Pāli*, by Margaret Cone, Oxford 2001-: The Pali Text Society.
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- Jā = *Jātaka*, together with *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* (ed. Fausbøll 1877–96).
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- Merv-Av = Seishi Karashima and Margarita I. Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya “The *Avadāna* Anthology from Merv, Turkmenistan”, in: *Buddhist Manuscripts from Central Asia: The St. Petersburg Sanskrit Fragments* (StPSF), ed. Seishi Karashima and Margarita I. Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya, pp. 145-505.
- MN = *Majjhima-Nikāya*, ed. V. Trenckner, R. Chalmers, 3 vols., London 1888~1899: PTS, vol. 4 (Indexes by C. A. F. Rhys Davids), London 1925: PTS.
- MN(tr.Ñm) = *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*, original translation by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli; translation edited and revised by Bhikkhu Bodhi, Boston 1995: Wisdom Publications (The Teachings of the Buddha).
- Mv(KM) = a new edition of the *Mahāvastu*, under preparation by Katarzyna Marciniak.
- MW = Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Oxford 1899: The Clarendon Press.
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Figure. ‘*bandhanāś(r)aya*’, the part of a Tāla fruit right underneath the husk.

